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Countryhumans Hispanic Heritage Month

Taking place between September 15 and October 15, this book will be updated once a day with a oneshot based on the following prompts. This was put together by ApeculiarChild2 and I highly recommend you take part, as it is a fun way to celebrate Hispanic heritage and Spanish-speaking countries across the globe.

[image]

Días de la Independencias

Independence was hard. Although the United Provinces of Central America had only existed for a few short days, she was already hard at work trying to secure her independence and her government. It didn't help that her siblings, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, weren't being that helpful, preferring to spend their time indulging in the human existence.

Of course, they were her provinces, and although they were quintuplets born on the same date and time, they were younger and not as old as the United Provinces of Central America. She was the oldest, physically and mentally.

United Provinces of Central America loved her siblings, as rambunctious and young as they were. It was nice to see them be able to be childish and carefree, especially after everything their people had gone through. United Provinces of Central America might not have been alive for it, but her land and people remembered.

Their independence from Spain and then Mexico came to conquer them, making them a part of her country. Thankfully, it didn't take long for them to regain their independence, but there was no denying that their land had been involved in strife for a very long time.

They deserved a chance to be happy. United Provinces of Central America was the older sister and their country. She could handle things. As much as she wanted to be a sister, not a mother, her younger siblings needed someone to look after them.

"Central America! Central America!" Guatemala called, running up, tears in his eyes, "Honduras hurt me!"

United Provinces of Central America sighed and nodded to her politicians, "Please excuse me. I need to take care of my siblings."

United Provinces of Central America grabbed Guatemala's tiny hand and let the small province lead her out of the building to the house that they shared. As they approached, United Provinces of Central America could hear Costa Rica yelling at Honduras. El Salvador was sitting outside, drawing in the dirt with a stick. Upon hearing her approach, El Salvador looked up and smiled, running over to United Provinces of Central America and pulling her into a hug.

"I missed you. Honduras is being mean." El Salvador said. United Provinces of Central America hugged him back, smiling softly.

"Don't worry, Salvadorito. I'm going to talk to him." United Provinces of Central America said, patting him on the head as she pulled away. El Salvador shot her an adorable gap-toothed grin, and United Provinces of Central America felt her heart melt. Her little siblings were so adorable. It was no wonder United Provinces of Central America let them get away with far too much.

"Thank you," El Salvador said, pressing against United Provinces of Central America's side as she walked inside.

"Honduras! Where are you?" United Provinces of Central America called. Costa Rica came running out of the room, arms crossed.

"She's in her room," Costa Rica said. Thanking the province, United Provinces of Central America walked to Honduras' room and knocked on the door.

"Honduras? I'd like to speak with you," she said.

"Go away!"

"Honduras, I need to speak to you. Guatemala and El Salvador have both said that you have been very rude to them today, and I need to talk about it with you," United Provinces of Central America said, trying not to lose her temper.

"No! I don't want to!" Honduras said, but United Provinces of Central America opened the door anyway. Honduras had her head in her hands, curled up beside her bed.

"I know this is a very stressful time for everyone, but you can't act

like this towards your siblings. Nobody else does, and you aren't allowed to be an exception to that," United Provinces of Central America said.

"I'm not trying to be mean they're just being stupid!" Honduras protested. United Provinces of Central America sighed. She hated this, taking on the role of a mother. If only their mother wasn't Mexico, then they could have someone to settle disputes, to raise them.

Fate was not so kind.

"I...Honduras please just try to get along with your siblings. Once you are physically old enough you will be off to live with your governments, and you'll be away from your siblings, and you'll realize how much you miss them," United Provinces of Central America said. Honduras scowled.

"I'm still not going to apologize." Honduras said, "But I'll try to not be mean."

"Thank you, Duras. That's all I ask of you." Honduras looked away and didn't say anything. United Provinces of Central America left the room, walking back to where her other three siblings were.

"I've talked to her. She should stop, but try not to pick any fights with her." United Provinces of Central America said, "I'll be back for dinner, but I need to get back to work on our constitution."

She then turned to leave, heading back to the governmental building, ignoring the whispers from her younger siblings.

Hopefully, once their constitution was finished, things would calm down.

Sin Consuelo

Prompt: Mexico

Mexico was coated in ash.

It covered her arms and her legs, got in her feathers, and left her mouth dry.

It tasted like death.

Mexico felt tears trace their way down her face, cutting lines through the ash on her face as she mourned.

She was empty.

Mexico wanted to be mad at her government for what they had done, for the governmental change that had killed her children. She wanted to cry and scream and rage and take her revenge against all who were involved.

But she felt numb and could not bring herself to do it. She couldn't move. She couldn't feel. She was just empty.

What even was the point of living anymore with all of them gone? Without Tamaulipas' piercing laughter and ever-present joy, without Chihuahua's love of animals and the outdoors, without Sinaloa, her baby, so new to the world before she was ripped away.

What was the point of living without them, without Chihuahua, without Tamaulipas, without Sinaloa, without Guanajuato, without México State, without Oaxaca, without Puebla, without Michoacán, without San Luis Potosí, without Veracruz, without Jalisco, without Querétaro, without Yucatán, without Zacatecas, without Sonora, without Tabasco, without Coahuila, without Nuevo León, without Durango, without Chiapas, and without Federal District.

All twenty-one of her children were gone.

Mexico doesn't know how long she sat there, staring blankly at the piles of ash that were once her children until muffled voices began speaking around her. She just stared at the ash, trying to find the lights in her chest that were her children, trying to find them, and only finding an empty void of nothingness.

The people the voices belonged to eventually lifted Mexico to her feet, helping her walk to the door. Mexico felt distant as if she was watching everything from far away, head fuzzy and distant.

It was hard to do anything without help, but anything she did, she did numbly and stiffly.

Mexico blinked, and she was sitting in a bed, ash cleaned from her arms and legs but still caught up in her wings, itching fiercely. Mexico couldn't bring herself to care about it.

Mexico was still crying.

She couldn't bring herself to move, hunger and thirst clawing at her mind and body like an angry beast, drowning her in pain and paralyzing her even more.

She didn't care.

She deserved it for letting her children die, for not stopping it. She deserved to have a slow and painful death, to waste away into nothingness.

She deserved no mercy.

The human aids tried their best to make her eat and drink as Mexico slid in and out of awareness, broken up only by the blissful nothingness of sleep.

Sleep was so much like death.

Was that what her children felt as their bodies crumbled and lives ended, turning into nothingness before her very eyes? Was it like falling asleep to them?

Or was it painful and slow, agonizing and cruel?

She didn't know. She wasn't sure if she wanted to know.

Very few people come to see Mexico anymore. Miguel Barragán Andrade had come once to tell Mexico about the age of prosperity that would come now that they had a new constitution. Mexico spit at his feet and told him his constitution brought death and pain.

It was the first thing to rouse her to her feet before she collapsed out of weakness and exhaustion.

It was the first time she had felt anything but numb emptiness. She had felt rage, pain, and overwhelming choking sorrow. She had sobbed harder than she ever had before until she was too exhausted to remain awake.

The numbness had ended somewhat after that. Mexico began to move again, taking short walks around the house she had been brought to. She wasn't sure who it belonged to, but she was glad she wasn't at her home. She knew she would be unable to handle that.

Mexico ignored her government's demands to reengage in politics, to do what they demanded of her. They decided they could work without the countryhumans of her children, so they could work without her.

Instead, Mexico devoted her time to making her house a memorial to her children. She wouldn't step foot there, but no one else would either. The grounds became a graveyard, and Mexico moved into a new home.

Her old one belonged to the dead now.

And Mexico became as lifeless as the ghosts that roamed there.

Miel

Prompt: Costa Rica

Costa Rica and her human lover, Gabriel, were very close. She had told him her human name and revealed her human face and had never felt more at peace with a human. She loved him with all her heart and couldn't imagine not having him in her life.

"So why did you pick Ámbar Dulce as your human name?" Gabriel asked her one afternoon. Costa Rica shrugged.

"I like the name Ámbar. I think it's pretty. Even with the surnames and other names changing for me, I've always used Ámbar. It's just as much my name as Costa Rica is." Costa Rica explained. Gabriel smiled.

"That's nice. It's some sense of normality for you," he asked. Costa Rica smiled and nodded.

"It's something that is wholly mine and is a constant, yes." Costa Rica said, smile fading, "It's hard to have constants. You're the first human I've told in a long time about me. And...and I will love you with all my heart. And when you die, I will mourn you for the rest of my life. And it hurts."

Costa Rica took off her glasses, wiping her eyes to prevent tears from falling. When she put them back on, Gabriel looked at her with a sad smile.

"And what about Dulce?" he asked, not bringing up the somber topic that Costa Rica had just brought up, just focusing on their original conversation. Costa Rica couldn't be more grateful for it.

"My sister, Federal Republic of Central America, always used to say I had a sweet tooth, and...and I was missing her a lot when I picked the name. I was mourning her. So I decided to pick a name to honor

her by." Costa Rica said with a shaky smile. Gabriel smiled, pulling her into a side hug.

"It's a beautiful name. Reminds me of honey," he said. Costa Rica shot him a confused look.

"Honey? Why honey?" she asked.

"Honey is amber in color, and it is sweet like you. Therefore, honey. You're Miel." Gabriel said, a broad grin on his face. Costa Rica smiled back.

"I like that," she said.

"Good, 'cause that's going to be my nickname for you from now on," Gabriel said. Costa Rica leaned into his side.

"It's a good nickname. Especially because I love eating and making honey," Costa Rica said before shaking her head, "How did I never realize that my human name was just a description of honey?"

"Because you focus too much on big things and not the little funny things in life that make life more fun." Gabriel pointed out. Costa Rica sighed.

"Isn't that the truth? I mean, I can, but it's hard. Too much stuff we have to be a part of that takes up all the focus." Costa Rica said.

"Don't worry, Miel, I'll be here to help show you the little things in life."

"Thank you, Gabriel."

Una Reflexión de un País

Prompt: Chile

Chile hated being controlled. He hated everything about his government right now. It was bad enough that United States had helped to overthrow Salvador Allende (as much as the man denied it), but...but...

Chile's head was fuzzy sometimes. Some days, it was hard to think. When President Pinochet's voice would be so loud that it overwhelm Chile's thoughts.

He knew it was the government doing it to him, warping his mind and making it harder and harder for Chile to think.

It burned deep inside him, his inability to speak out, to say what he really felt. He tried, he really did, and most of the time, he succeeded, but sometimes, it was like his mouth was sewn shut whenever he tried to speak against Pinochet.

Chile hated it.

The hatred was one of the things that kept him going, a burning fuel deep inside, a defiant look in the eye that Pinochet could not take away, even as he warped Chile's mind and body to his whims.

Chile was lucky, in a way. He had seen what martial law had done to Philippines, a mindless puppet in a way that was much worse than any real puppet state. At least Chile was still himself, even with Pinochet pushing him further and further down a path meant to turn him into a puppet.

The way Pinochet tried to make Chile burn books, tried to make Chile say that Pinochet was the greatest thing to happen to his country, and all the actions Pinochet wanted Chile to take were meant to turn him into something like the Philippines.

But Chile was still the Republic of Chile, and he would not be so easily controlled.

Pinochet could disrupt Chile's thoughts all he wanted and try to use the power that softened Chile's mind to control him, but Chile would always break free. He was not going to be controlled. He refused to be controlled.

Chile was born of people who wanted freedom and independence.

He refused to be someone who denied his people those rights.

Chile was lucky. Pinochet could not throw him in prison for that, or make him disappear, or do any of the many things he had done to others to him. Chile was the country. Chile was a very public figure that could not be denied his place.

That gave Chile some protection. Pinochet would not hurt him in any visible way.

It was Chile's private little Cold War with the dictator. Chile didn't know when it would end, but he knew that it could not control him and would not be around forever.

Chile just had to endure.

Until then, he would be Pinochet's constant reminder that he was not beloved by Chileans and that they knew, even if the world didn't, that he was not a legitimate leader of Chile.

Chile would ensure.

And eventually, Pinochet would fall.

La Melancolía de Independencia

Prompt: El Salvador

El Salvador was an independent country. He was independent now. Of Spain, of Mexico, of his sister—it was just him and him alone as the countryhuman of his nation.

El Salvador knew he should be happy. And he was, he really was.

But in order to get his independence, his sister had to die.

El Salvador never wanted Federal Republic of Central America to die. She was more than a sister to him; she was also his mother. As much as she denied it, Central America has raised him and his other siblings. To him, she was and always would be his mother.

And now she was dead.

And El Salvador was expected to celebrate.

His living siblings and niece had scattered, returning to their own, now independent countries.

And El Salvador was alone. He didn't know how to be a country on his own, and a part of him didn't want to. He was so used to having family so close to him, family he could visit as he pleased without many political implications.

It was scary to be on his own. Now, he had to do the things his mother had done. He was in charge of diplomacy, of his borders, of looking after his people.

It was a daunting ask.

Was El Salvador up to that massive task? Could he live up to the

legacy of his mother?

He didn't know.

But he sure hoped so. He didn't want his mother to have died for nothing, for all his people who fought and died for his freedom to have died for nothing.

He wanted to be the best countryhuman he could be for his people.

He only hoped he could live up to that goal.

Salido del Clóset

Prompt: Guatemala

As this takes place during a UN meeting, bold is Spanish.

UN meetings for countries would very quickly be derailed. While they were meant to foster an air of understanding and mutual respect, they were often turned into physiological battlegrounds and places where countries made personal announcements to everyone at once.

Countrypeople weren't meant to be political figures, so it made sense that they would always devolve into their own kind of nonsense, but it was still a problem that persisted.

Guatemala was not one to talk, however, as she was not immune to using UN meetings for other things, especially today of all days, where she planned on making a personal announcement herself.

"Now, before we begin, as I know you all love using these meetings as a place to make personal announcements, does anyone have anything they need to get out of their system before we begin?" United Nations asked. Guatemala cleared her throat.

"I do," she said, using the more feminine voice she had been practicing and ignoring Honduras's raised eyebrow and Australia's poignant look. She had never felt this anxious before, and she was afraid she might chicken out of coming out.

"Go ahead," United Nations said, sounding somewhat annoyed. Pushing aside her anxiety, Guatemala took a deep breath out.

"I am female, and I am now using she/her y ella as my pronouns. Update yourselves accordingly. I will not be taking any further questions at this time." Guatemala said, sitting back down and watching carefully to see the reactions of the other countries.

"Thank you for letting us know. I'll have my assistant update any documents we can with your pronouns," United Nations said, "Now, does anyone else have anything to announce?"

Honduras nearly threw herself out of her seat, throwing a hand in the air, "I'm a man! He/him, él!"

"Hijo de puta! It's bad enough we were born at the same time, but you had to come out at the same time as me?" Guatemala explained, giving her si–brother an annoyed look. Honduras shrugged, sitting down.

"I've wanted to do it for a while. Seeing you do it...courage from others, no? What Central America always told us about when we were little." Honduras said, sitting down and giving her a sad smile.

"Well, now that my brother has derailed my big moment by reminding the world that we are two members of a set of quintillizo, I think we can begin las Naciones Unidas," Guatemala said, "And Costa Rica y El Salvador, you two better not come out too!"

"Two out of five is impressive enough, little sister," El Salvador called, causing Guatemala to make a rude gesture at him.

"Please handle this outside of the meeting. I am moving on to more important things, " United Nations said before he began speaking about something else. El Salvador shot Guatemala a bright grin before Guatemala looked back toward United Nations.

As annoying as it was to have Honduras hijack her coming out, Guatemala was happy. She had known she was a woman for over a hundred and fifty years, and pretending to be a man was hard, and it hurt.

She knew not everyone was going to be accepting of her gender, but she didn't care. She was out now, and now no one had an excuse to call her a man.

Guatemala was happy in a way she hadn't been for a long time.

Putamente Bananas

Prompt: Honduras

Honduras was angry. He was angry with a lot of things. His government, the banana companies, United States—all of it.

He felt like his life was slipping out of his hands, like he was getting closer and closer to being a puppet, dancing on someone else's strings.

He hated it.

The banana companies controlled so much about his country now, and whenever Honduras tried to do anything about it, United States sent over his military to keep him contained and to undo whatever progress Honduras had made.

It was humiliating to be an independent nation that United States and his army had decided to treat like a rebellious child. He hated how the military talked down to him, how they called him a young girl and a little girl and acted like he wasn't nearly one hundred years of age.

They seemed to ignore the fact that he was a countryperson, that he was not some child or untrained fool, but an independent countryperson who had been his own country for decades.

He was a good country, too, a great one even.

But between the banana companies and the United States, his country had been plunged into strife and civil war. And the United States and their military had the audacity to say that it was Honduras' fault, that they were helping him because it was clear that he needed it like they weren't the ones who helped cause the problem in the first place.

Honduras hated it.

The fake kindness in United States' voice, the poisonous nature of his words, the way he spoke like he knew better, the way his voice was sweet and kind and yet so deadly.

Honduras knew he could have it worse. United States could be occupying his country and not just intervening whenever he felt like it. Honduras knew the United States could just be moments away from snapping and taking over his country, taking away his freedom, leaving Honduras to be run by a bunch of fucking banana companies.

Honduras felt like he had to walk on eggshells around United States, wanting to convince the older nation to leave him be but at the same time not inadvertently convincing the bastard that Honduras was unable to take care of himself or threatening his interests and that he needed to be occupied.

He wasn't going to give United States a justification.

He wasn't going to end up like his sister.

Honduras just felt very powerless; he couldn't do anything to help, and he was adrift in a current.

He wanted to help. He knew—hoped that the interventions would not last forever. He hoped that United States would get tired and stop, or that he would run out of money to do this, or that something else would get his attention and he would leave Honduras alone.

Honduras didn't want to become a colony of the United States.

He wanted to be himself.

And that didn't involve *fucking bananas.*

La Conversación Con Un Imperio

Prompt: Nicaragua

"United States. When will your troops leave my country?" Nicaragua asked the taller nation as soon as he arrived in her country, about two months after his troops had come.

"When it is safe again. This is done with your best interests in mind." United States said, his tone condescending.

"You mean your best interests. You wouldn't be here if there weren't something in it for you." Nicaragua said, tone even as she crossed her arms.

"Whatever happens in our continent is of interest to me. That includes protecting you and your family," United States said. Nicaragua scowled. She hated how United States got like this, like all the shitty things he did were with some noble and holy reason, like he was some grand protector protecting all of mankind when in reality he was a selfish asshole who cared for no one but himself and found pretty little words to hide all his shitty little actions under.

"Lie to yourself and your people all you want. But I am no fool, and I will not be fooled by your lies. You have been interfering with my family for many reasons, and those are not reasons backed by good intentions for me and the others in Central America," Nicaragua said, her voice a venomous hiss.

In that moment, America changed, his eyes darkening behind his glasses.

"I am helping you. I am letting you conduct this meeting in your language. I have been nothing but kind to yo—"

"And yet, who's fault is it that José Zelaya is gone? He was a well-loved president, and you forced him out of office!" Nicaragua said, storming towards United States, who grabbed her wrist in one hand.

"Be careful," he said, his tone one of warning, before he let her go. Nicaragua pulled her hand away, teeth clenched. There was something so patronizing about his voice, something that reminded Nicaragua of the man's estranged father.

"Or what?" Nicaragua challenged.

"I have no command over the men stationed here. But they, like many of my people, do not take insults to their nation kindly, especially when it comes from someone I am working hard to protect. They'll see you as ungrateful," United States said.

"I am ungrateful, you self-righteous nation! Because you have occupied my country and changed my government, and you want me to be *grateful*?" Nicaragua exclaimed, hardly believing the audacity of the man before her. United States stepped back, mouthing something, before shaking his head.

It was a strange reaction to her comment, one that left Nicaragua puzzled. What was he doing?

"Listen, I gave Cuba his independence—"

"Not Puerto Rico."

"Puerto Rico doesn't want it. Cuba did. And you want your independence, so that I will give that to you. You have to trust me. I promise it will work out fine. You just need to have a little more faith," United States said, crossing his arms, eyes staring her down in a silent challenge.

"Forgive me, sir, for not believing you when you say that. I find it very unlikely that a foreign army will leave after already interfering in my government," Nicaragua snarked. The darkness in United States' eyes increased. For a moment, Nicaragua felt fear. United States was much more powerful than her, and she did not want to cause him to snap and hurt her, decide that taking over her country

was really worth his time.

Nicaragua felt more like an interesting little experiment to him, something to study and observe before leaving when he had taken what he wanted. She knew United States was here for his own selfish interests, and she wished she could do something more about it without risking an international incident.

"I suggest you believe it. And if not, my men will show you. But a reputation for being selfish and ungrateful gets you nowhere in life, you know," United States said.

"I'll keep it in mind. But I think it's best that you yourself go. Best not to start a diplomatic incident." Nicaragua said. United States tilted his head to the side, something akin to amusement in his eyes.

"Are you saying you'll hurt me?"

"Are you willing to find out?" Nicaragua challenged, knowing it could backfire on her at any given moment. Luckily, United States just smiled, and vanished, headed back to the Land In-Between or his own land.

Nicaragua scowled at the place where the empire had once stood.

She really disliked that man.

La Madre Nueva

Prompt: Panama

Panama was fifteen days old when it happened. When the Canal Zone was born. She knew it was going to happen eventually; that was why United States helped her get her independence in the first place, but she never fathomed or had the time to fathom how young she would actually be when her child was born.

She was fifteen days old, and she had a child. Panama's hands were shaking, and she could hardly believe that this was happening. She was a mother. Oh, díos mios, she was a *mother*.

Panama had not stopped panicking since she realized that, since the tugging that would lead her to her child began, the same sort of tug that Colombia must have felt only *fifteen days prior*.

She was too young for this. Thankfully, at least, she hoped it was thankfully, the United States was going to be looking after and raising their child and give Panama visiting rights. It was better...it was better than having to raise a child when she barely knew who she was as a person.

United States had gone ahead to meet their child first, as Panama was too afraid to, hands shaking. She was lightheaded and felt sick. How was she meant to mother this child, even if they weren't living with her?

Panama was broken out of her thoughts by the door opening, and United States entered the room, a child by his side—*their* child by his side.

"Panama. This is our daughter, Panama Canal Zone," the United States said. Panama Canal Zone was a little girl who looked about seven—about half Panama's physical age. Panama looked fifteen. People would better mistake her and her daughter as sisters than as

mother and daughter.

Panama still felt faint and lightheaded.

"Hello, Canal Zone. I am Panama,"

She didn't want to say that she was this child's mother. She was...she couldn't. She was too young, and she didn't want to believe it.

"Hello, Mother," Panama Canal Zone said, causing Panama to let out a shaky and terrified breath.

"Canal Zone, Panama is very close in age to you. She might not want to be—" United States began, and as much as Panama was grateful for what he was trying to do, her government had been clear.

She needed to claim the Panama Canal Zone as her child so that United States government would remember that the land was just a lease, that Panama still had a claim to it. They said that it would be good for her and her people to have a claim to the child and that having a child would help her with her duty of being a countryhuman by preparing her for responsibility.

She had to do this. For her people. So she could be the best version of Panama there was for her people.

"No. I'm...I'm still older," Panama said, ignoring how uncomfortable she was. "I am her mother. I...I will be her mother."

"Panama, you—"

"I am old enough. Age is weird for us anyway, and you have her more often than I will. You were the one who wanted the Panama Canal Zone created so quickly, so don't act all concerned now. It will be *fine*," Panama insisted, turning back to her child, who looked at her with confused eyes, "I am your mother, regardless of what your father thinks."

"If you're sure, I won't push. Do you want to work out visitation now or later? It's been a long day, and I need to get Canal Zone set

up at my house." United States said.

"Later. We can do it later. I...later is good," Panama said. United States nodded, and he and her daughter vanished. Panama's knees then gave out, and she realized she was shaking all over.

God, she barely knew how to be a country or a person. Why did her government expect her to be a good mother? Why couldn't United States have waited one year for her to figure out herself before forcing her to have a child?

Why couldn't she be a child?

Un País y Un Estado

Venezuela loved her states; she truly did, but why must they be so stubborn? They seemed determined to drive her insane at every given opportunity.

"Are you alright, Mama?" Carabobo, the eldest of Venezuela's states, asked.

"Yes, I'm fine. Just wondering how your siblings got so stubborn." Venezuela asked, giving him a small smile. Carabobo snorted in amusement.

"When there's so many of us, there's bound to be constant arguments." he said, "But if you want, I can tell them that they're giving you a headache and should cut it out."

"Thank you, Carabobo, but I will be fine. The sooner they work out this issue, the less they will fight over it. And besides, it has not gotten that far. They've barely started yelling at each other." Venezuela said. Carabobo rolled his eyes.

"If you say so," he said, sitting down beside Venezuela and resting his head on her shoulder. Venezuela smiled, wrapping an arm around her son.

"I'm so lucky to have you kids, you know?" Venezuela said. Carabobo laughed.

"You tell us that all the time, Mama," he said. Venezuela pressed a gentle kiss to his forehead.

"And I'll tell you it over and over again to make sure you don't forget," she said, brushing some of Carabobo's hair off his forehead. The state groaned but didn't make any effort to move. "I love you, Carabobo."

"I love you too, Mama."

El Juicio

Prompt: Argentina

Argentina was careful to keep his face blank and show no emotion. This lesson had been taught to him throughout his time under the military government. It was a safeguard to keep the government from trying to go after him or his provinces and to prevent them from knowing how much control they had over his mind at any given time.

Now, he was keeping it blank for a very different reason.

He was happy to see the military junta on trial after all they had done to him, his provinces, and his people. But he was afraid of what would happen if they were acquitted if they were set free—what they would do to his children and siblings to punish Argentina for being happy that they were finally facing justice.

Someone had already threatened him, told Argentina precisely what would happen to his family if he showed any support to the prosecutors, if he testified.

So, Argentina kept his face empty.

It was safe. It had always been safe.

Now, he would see how much longer he needed to keep his face like this, to see if they would be convicted of their crimes and if Argentina would finally be free of them.

Argentina hoped they would be convicted. He...he was afraid of them. He was a coward. If he were a better nation, he would have stood up to them, done something more to protect his people. But...by the time he saw how bad it really was going to be, he was too scared; their influence had already wriggled into his mind like an evil little worm.

A part of him was glad he had lost la Guerra de Malvinas. It helped lead to the military facing the consequences of their actions. And...it was better that Islas Malvinas did not have to deal with the Junta. She would rejoin Argentina again someday, but hopefully, on a better day when Argentina was a country that his people could be proud of.

Today was far from that day, though.

Argentina spent every day of the trial silently praying in the back of the courtroom. Some days, his siblings and children joined him, and others, he was alone.

He prayed for them to be convicted. He prayed for forgiveness for his inaction. He prayed for mercy for his people. He prayed that all those who died, all those that he failed in the most intense way possible, made it to heaven. His rosary twisted through his fingers again and again and again, soothing his nerves as he looked now at his feet, refusing to make eye contact with the witnesses, refusing to make eye contact with the people he failed.

He couldn't face them. Not yet.

Maybe he would never be able to face them.

Argentina was a coward, after all.

Argentina sighed, the beads of his rosary wrapped tightly around his fingers as he waited for the jury to return and read the verdict. Buenos Aires, who had joined him for the reading of the verdict, elbowed him in the side. Argentina moved his eyes from his hand to her face, which was twisted into a small frown.

"Cut it out, Argentina. You're going to hurt yourself," she whispered, concern in her eyes. Argentina looked away, back down at his hands, drawing the beads tighter.

He deserved pain, for his failure.

"It's my fault," he whispered, "I should have stopped them before they got this far."

"It's not your fault! It's United States' fault for supporting them! He gave them this power. But it's not your fault," Buenos Aires said, grabbing his hand. Argentina sighed, leaning his head against his older sister's shoulder, trying to keep the tears from his eyes. He could feel Videla's gaze on him.

"I...I still should have done more."

"And ignore the fact that a government like that can mess with your mind? I know you...maybe you could have broken out of it, but I watched that government force its will to be yours. The days you came home with foggy eyes and a confused gaze, and I watched you break free time and time again. You *tried*," Buenos Aires said, wrapping an arm around Argentina's side.

"I could have tried harder. I was a coward. I was too scared of them to try to do anything more," Argentina protested. It was becoming harder and harder to keep the emotions from his face.

"You were scared that things would get worse for us and your people. You can't...hermanito, you can't take the weight of their sins. Their crimes are theirs alone to bear, not yours. You never commanded anything. You...you are a victim. We all are," Buenos Aires said right as the jury entered the room.

Argentina was quick to sit back up, straightening out his back and letting any emotion slide from his body language. Buenos Aires shot him a look that promised that their conversion was not over yet.

He ignored her. He could escape his sister later. Instead, Argentina put his complete focus on the jury, staring at them perhaps a bit too intently.

It felt like the entire courtroom was holding its breath.

"We find the defendants guilty."

Argentina burst into joyful tears, the blank mask falling off his face as sheer, pure joy overcame it.

They were guilty. They would be sentenced for their crimes. They would face punishment. Argentina could live again, not being

weighted down by the heavy fist of the junta.

Nunca más. Argentina thought, remembering the words of Chief Prosecutor Julio César Strassera. Never again.

Argentina would not let this happen again. It was time to make a better future for all his people.

And make up the best he could for the ones he had failed.

Rodeado do Tierra

Prompt: Bolivia

Bolivia had known there was no hope of getting the Litoral Department and Puna de Atacama back. He had known that for a long time since the war. But a small, perhaps foolish, part of him had hoped that maybe he would get them back.

Bolivia always did have a hard time letting go of things.

"Hello, Chile," Bolivia said as he entered the room. They were in Chile's capital, not his own. It made sense; he had lost the war, but it still hurt. His cousin smiled, an almost cocky grin making its way across his face.

"Hello, mi primo. It is so lovely to see you again! You've been avoiding me since 1899, you know? Still licking your wounds?" Chile said, standing up and throwing an arm over Bolivia's shoulder, gilding him to the table. His voice sounded genuine, but his words sent waves of irritation through Bolivia's body. He clenched his fists, exhaling sharply.

He couldn't punch Chile, no matter how annoyingly egotistical he was. This was the signing of a peace treaty that would establish their borders. Bolivia couldn't turn it into a diplomatic incident. He didn't need another war.

"I have other things to look after, you know. Not all my politics concern you," Bolivia answered, trying to keep his voice even, drawing his wings closer to his back. He didn't like how they brushed against Chile's side.

He had gotten them four years after the War of the Pacific. As much as he enjoyed flight, they didn't make up for what he had lost.

Nothing would make up for what he has lost.

Chile pulled away, the grin still in place.

"Ah, primo, but they would be more fun if they did," Chile said, grin seemingly becoming wider at Bolivia's annoyed expression, "I'm joking. You need to lighten up."

Bolivia began to consider "accidentally" breaking his glasses so he would not have to see Chile's smug face so clearly. It would make him feel better. And it wouldn't cause a diplomatic incident.

"Chile, can we just sign this treaty? I have things I need to return, too, and I can't waste all my time here." Bolivia sighed. Chile waved a hand dismissively.

"Fine, fine. But, primo, seriously consider stopping by sometime. I'd love to show you around," Chile said. Bolivia crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow.

"I'd rather not, but...thank you for the *generous* offer," he drawled out sarcastically. Chile was never one to understand sarcasm, however, and the egotistical country just smiled.

Chile then picked up the pen, signing his own name with a flourish, before passing it over to Bolivia. Bolivia picked up the pen and paused, a storm of emotions swirling in his chest.

Pride and shame and embarrassment and guilt and—

"Do you need help writing?" Chile asked. Bolivia gritted his teeth.

"I'm *fine*," he said firmly before signing his name, shoulders slumping as he did so. He was officially a landlocked nation. His ports, his coastline, his mines—they all belonged to Chile now.

Bolivia felt like a failure.

"Thank you for your time, primo. It was nice seeing you again," Chile said, a pleasant smile on his face.

Bolivia still really wanted to punch him. But he did his best to plaster on a diplomatic smile.

"Have a good day, Chile. I must get back to my country now," Bolivia said before turning around to leave.

The sooner he got out of that man's country, the better.

El Istmo

Prompt: Colombia

Colombia wasn't surprised by Panama's independence. Her connection with him and his country has always been strenuous, especially with the Tapón del Darién between them. And there had been a Panama, years ago, who declared independence back during the original wars with Spain.

That didn't mean it stung any less. What stung the post was that Panama's independence didn't stay between them, didn't stay as a conflict between them.

Instead, fucking United States had to get involved.

That man didn't know how to leave anything alone. He thought everyone's business was his and got involved time and time again.

Would Panama have gotten her independence without him? Maybe. Colombia didn't know how things would have played out without that aggravating man getting in the way time and time again, but he didn't really care.

United States had only gotten involved to further his own interests anyways. He only got involved to build that fucking canal.

He didn't care about Panama or her independence. He just cared about himself.

Colombia hated it. Sure, Panama was her own country now, but she was still Colombia's daughter, and he hated the idea of Panama being used by United States. He tried to convince her that she was making a mistake.

He offered her anything to pull her away from United States' influence. Hell, he even offered to make Panama City his new

capital city, to give her a reason to rejoin him, to prove that he did care about her people and would be a good country for them.

It didn't work. She left, and United States and her had a child, and now he was off to work building that fucking canal.

Colombia wasn't the only one concerned by United States' actions. Chile, his machismo primo and close friend, was also worried about United States' growing influence.

"He wants to become an empire, mi primo, and he'll manipulate whoever he can here to get that," his cousin had said. If Chile, America's biggest dumbass, could put that together, then it was becoming glaringly obvious, as if it wasn't obvious before.

So Colombia walked into this meeting with his daughter with a few ulterior motives. He did want to see her again, to figure out how she was doing, and to establish diplomatic relations... but he also wanted to see how much influence United States had on her. The canal construction was done, but the Canal Zone still lived, and with it, United States' ability to manipulate Panama.

She had been independent for twenty-one years before Colombia's government recognized her. United States could have done a lot in that time. Panama was already his fucking protectorate, and everyone and their mother knew what Britain and France did to their protectorates.

"Hello, Panama," Colombia said as he noticed his daughter enter the room, quickly running a hand through his hair to ensure it looked presentable.

"Hello, Father. Thank you for finally recognizing me. I look forward to finally establishing our borders," Panama said. Her tone was slightly frosty, but she acknowledged Colombia as her father, which had to be a good thing, right?

"I do as well. But may we talk first? I have not seen you since 1903 —"

"When you were begging me to rejoin you. I remember," Panama

said, her gaze so steely for one so young. Colombia felt his face flush.

"Yes, well, that is in the past. You are your own country now," Columbia said, trying to ignore the awkward air that had developed before clearing his throat. "I know things have not been great between us, but this is supposed to be a new start. Can't I get to know the person you have become?"

"Fine. But I have things to do after this, and Canal Zone and I have dinner planned this evening, so I would like this not to run too long," Panama said. Colombia nodded, a small smile spreading on his face.

"I understand. Thank you. Would you like to sign the treaty now so you are not under any pressure to stay if you need to leave?" Colombia asked. Panama smiled.

"I would like that; thank you," she said before signing the treaty, Colombia doing the same.

"So, how are things between you and my granddaughter?" Colombia asked. Panama gave him an exasperated look.

"Are you only here to talk to me about my relationship with the United States?" she asked.

Yes.

"No, of course not. I want to know you. You are my neighbor and my daughter," Colombia insisted. Panama raised an eyebrow but answered Colombia anyway.

"Canal Zone is a good friend. She's my daughter, but because we are so close in age, she is also my friend. She likes learning new things and traveling. When she is not with her father or me, she runs off on some ship passing through her land, off on her next adventure," Panama said, a fond smile on her face. It was clear she cared for her child.

"Is she with United States often?" Colombia asked.

"He has her two weeks a month, and I have her the other two unless she's run off. It...works. United States wouldn't let her visit during the Great War, but everything changes in times of war," Panama said, brushing it off. Colombia scowled, mouth moving before his brain.

"What would you know about war? You never fought in it before," he said. Panama had no idea what war was like. How did she know what changes in times of war? How did she know that United States was doing it for the right reasons and not just to gain more control of the Canal Zone?

"I declared war on los Imperios Centrales!" Panama snapped, standing up from her chair and slamming her hands down on the table. Colombia stood in response, looking down at the young nation, at his daughter.

"I know, but you never fought them. You cannot claim to understand war until you see it, truly see it," Colombia said, shutting his eyes against the onslaught of memories.

"You can't claim to understand me when you refused to acknowledge my existence for most of my life!" Panama said, a steely gaze in her eye before she vanished. Colombia sighed, collapsing back down into his chair.

He messed it up again. He really wasn't good at being a father.

Part of him wanted to blame United States. Part of him wanted to blame himself.

All of him wanted to do better.

He could only hope that things would indeed turn out better in the future.

El Libre de Vuelo

Prompt: Ecuador

Ecuador loved flying.

It was an escape from politics, an escape from annoying countries, and a chance to just exist in the world around him.

It was freeing, especially since he hated being in cities. He felt cramped and trapped, which is part of why flying was so special for him and a big reason why his house was situated far in the mountains.

Well, why he wanted to live in the house that was situated in the far in the mountains. His role in his country left him living closer to Quito. At least Quito was in the mountains, making it easy for Ecuador to escape there.

Sometimes, he got to see Andean condors, the same bird that gave him his wings; the bird was proudly displayed in the center of his flag. If he had the chance, Ecuador would always call out a greeting to the majestic birds.

Today, Ecuador was escaping from politics.

He needed a break, his head swirling with thoughts and opinions. Sometimes, it was too much, too overwhelming, and he just needed to soar off into the wilderness, feel the wind in his face, and be at peace.

Flying was wonderful. Ecuador had no idea what he would do if his flag had not gifted him wings.

Probably be a lot more miserable.

La Madre de Perú

Prompt: Peru. Important to mention they are speaking Quechua in this oneshot.

"Mamay?" Peru asked his adoptive mother one evening as they made pachamanca together.

"Yes, churi?" She asked, looking up at him with kind and ancient eyes. Quechua did not know how old she was, and no one had been able to figure it out. She simply was, in a way that few others were.

"Why did you choose to adopt me? My government has caused you a lot of pain. I would...it wouldn't hurt if you never wanted anything to do with me and just...never spoke to me," Peru asked, looking down in shame.

"You are not your government. You know that," Quechua said simply, sitting down and looking up at Peru with a small tilt of her head.

"But I...I supported...some of the awful things they did to you," Peru said.

"I know, but you have felt regret for those actions, and I know you are trying to make up for it. And I...I can see that you are lonely," Quechua said.

"Lonely?" Peru asked. He didn't...he didn't feel lonely...did he?

"You call the others primos, but you are distant because you are all countries, unable to be close. You have human friends, but you cannot be close because you are a country. I know loneliness very well. I have lost much before you came along before the Europeans came along. It is not all you. And...many of my people are yours. If I can help prevent you from being as lonely as I have been, give you family and stability, then I will," Quechua said, "And you have always been family, even distant."

"I...thank you," Peru said, turning back to the pachamanca, thinking over his mother's words. He...she was right. He liked having family, someone who was always there for him.

It was nice.

El Olvidado Mismo

Prompt: Paraguay. This oneshot was inspired by one by geisterland on ao3. I will link it in the comments if I do not forget. Really fun and something I've wanted to do for a while. It's the longest CH HHM oneshot by far so far.

Paraguay's life had become a living hell. Ever since the outbreak of war four years ago, his life had warped into Hell on Earth as he watched his people, his friends, fall and die at the hands of the Triple Alliance.

Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. At the rate the war was going, Paraguay would not be surprised if they attempted to kill him, to wipe his nation from the Earth, and take his land for themselves.

Paraguay was tired.

He was tired of war, tired of dying, tired of starving, tired of losing everyone and everything important to him.

He was just tired.

He fought anyway. Sometimes, he wasn't sure why he still fought, not when there was so little hope of him winning. Sometimes, he wondered how he could have ever been optimistic about the war.

Sometimes, he wondered what the point of it all was.

The Triple Alliance was close to his capital now, close to his heart. Paraguay wondered if he would be able to defend it, if he had the men, the morale, the strength. He barely had the strength himself. He was weak from hunger and the war. His body's strength was fading, and he felt as if he would collapse and not get back up any second.

He knew they could die and come back, but this war seemed to

have stretched his immortality to the limit. God could only return him to life so many times in a row before his body did truly give up on him.

The battle they just fought at Lomas Valentinas had only seemed to prove that Paraguay was not going to be able to win the war. He had been taken captive. It was...it was over.

A part of him felt numb.

So when Brazil arrived, he didn't say anything, just glared up at the man with hate.

"Olá, Paraguai," the empire said, "I apologize for Argentina and Uruguay's absence. They have better things to do."

Paraguay gritted his teeth, anger flooding through him.

"I know they're here, puta, so you can cut it out," Paraguay snapped, staring Brazil right in the eyes. He may be weakened and defeated, but there was no way he was going to let Brazil humiliate him, not after everything the man and his armies had done to Paraguay.

"You could stand to be more polite. After all, we've won," Brazil said. Paraguay rolled his eyes.

"No, you haven't. I haven't surrendered. Just because you've captured me doesn't mean I or my people are going to give up," Paraguay said. He knew that Brazil was right, that the war was as good as won for him and the Triple Alliance, but there was no way Paraguay was admitting that to his face.

Brazil just shook his head, lifting his gun.

"That is a very foolish decision," he said, swinging the gun towards Paraguay. It cracked across his face, causing stars to light up in Paraguay's vision, his head ringing from the force of the blow.

"Come now, little nation, if you surrender, this can all be over for you—no more death," Brazil said, a smile curling at the corner of his lips. Paraguay shook his head before stumbling due to the wave of dizziness that brought him.

"Shut up, pendejo," Paraguay eventually said through the ringing of his head. Brazil shrugged.

"Have it your way," he said before swinging the gun again. Paraguay, too dazed to do anything about the coming blow, was once again hit in the head by the weapon, this blow causing him to collapse to the ground, head cracking against it.

Paraguay groaned, excruciating pain coating his head in a layer of agony. He wasn't unconscious, but he couldn't move. The blow had stunned him, leaving him still on the ground in more pain than he had ever been in before. Brazil crouched down beside him, frowning.

"Don't worry," Brazil said, lifting Paraguay's head with one hand and ignoring the low moan of pain it brought from Paraguay. I'll make this quick for you."

With those words, Brazil slammed Paraguay's head into the ground, and he knew no more.

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He woke up in pain. His body ached, but most of all, his head ached like a...like a...

He groaned, voice sounding weak to his lips.

He tried to open his eyes but shut them as soon as they opened, the light worsening his pain. It was too bright, too much for his eyes.

"Sir?" a surprised voice said from somewhere beside him. The voice was like a sword being driven into his skull, causing excruciating pain to lace it. It scattered his fuzzy thoughts, leaving him dazed and in more pain than when he had woken up.

"Too loud," he muttered quietly, his consciousness already fading.

Everything hurt too much. Everything...

He let himself fade away.

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He woke up with his head in less pain. It was the first time he felt aware upon waking up. He had woken before, brief glimmers of consciousness, but the darkness always reclaimed him in the end.

He couldn't feel the darkness as strongly this time.

He pulled his eyes open, still feeling lethargic and weak. But he was...he was awake. With shaky arms, he began pulling himself but into a sitting position, trying to figure out where he was.

"Paraguay!" a voice exclaimed, worry and surprise in its tone. There was a man standing there–a doctor. The man had to be a doctor because he was...he was hurt, right?

What had happened again? What was a paraguay? Was that the kind of injury he had? That didn't...that didn't make sense. What was happening?

"Paraguay? What's a Paraguay?" he asked, confused. The men exchanged looks, some kind of...of shock? Worry? Fear? There was something in their eyes. It wasn't good.

"Yes, sir, you are Paraguay, our nation," one of the men said, stepping forward. Paraguay. The name felt familiar, in a way that he couldn't place, but it...it felt right. That was...that was his name. He—Paraguay clutched his head, trying to piece together foggy fragments of nothingness.

"Oh...I..." Paraguay trailed off, unsure what to say. How could he have forgotten his own name? How could he have forgotten...forgotten...how much did he remember?

What happened to him?

"Do you not remember?" The doctor pried again, waving his hand as another man entered the room, dressed like a soldier. Why did Paraguay remember that? Why did he know that man was a doctor and the other was a soldier, but not his own name? Why was that what he remembered? Why did he remember useless details but nothing about himself?

"I...not...not really? Some things are...fuzzy and fragmented, but...I...I don't know," Paraguay said, a frown on his face as he tried *so hard* to remember.

"I'll inform the Triple Alliance." the soldier said before rushing off. Paraguay's eyes furrowed in confusion. Something about that name seemed familiar...

"What's the Triple Alliance?" he asked. The doctor's frowned, looking worried.

"Brazil, Argentina, and Uruaguy are the Triple Alliance," the doctor said.

"Is that...is that important? Does alliance mean they are my friends?" Paraguay asked. The doctor stared at him in shock.

"You really don't remember anything," he muttered. Paraguay frowned.

"What does that mean?" he asked. The doctor didn't respond, instead walking forward, placing a hand on Paraguay's head. "What are you doing?"

"I'm just checking on your head. This is...I've never heard of this happening to one of your kind before," he said. The doctor began poking at his head, asking Paraguay to tell the doctor if he felt any pain. Paraguay nodded and took the exam as an opportunity to examine his hands.

His right hand had a circle, with an almost complete circle of leaves inside of it and a yellow star in the middle. His name—his full name—Republic of Paraguay was written on it. It was...it was his seal. His other hand also had a circle on it but a different design: a lion with a strange red cap on a stick and the words "Peace and Justice."

The lion made Paraguay hyperaware of the tail that lay alongside his leg and the claws on his fingers.

Something about them felt connected.

He wished he knew what.

Suddenly, his musing was interrupted by the door flying open and a tall man storming inside, some strange emotion on his face.

"Vá embora! Everyone!" the tall man said, striding forward. Like the soldier from before, he had on a uniform, and his face...it was...it was...a flag...that's what that was, right? A flag, like Paraguay.

A country like Paraguay.

The country strode over to Paraguay, confidence and grace in his movements.

"My people tell me you don't remember anything," the country said.

"That's right," Paraguay said, shying away from the other nation, "I just remember waking up. Everything else is..."

He trailed off, unsure how to explain the weird state his head was in right now, how to explain how he felt.

"What is my name?" the tall country asked. Paraguay gaped at him, searching the fuzzy scraps of memory for a name but only coming up with vague emotions and sounds.

"I...I don't know, sir," Paraguay said, unsure of why he used that honorific, but something about it felt...right? Was that the right word?

Paraguay was confused.

The country scanned him over, making Paraguay shrink in on himself from the intense gaze before shaking his head.

"You really don't remember me? Anything?" the country asked, disbelief clear in his tone. Paraguay shook his head.

"Were we close?" Paraguay asked. The tall nation laughed.

"You could say that. I am Brazil," the nation—Brazil—said. Paraguay smiled.

"Nice to meet you, Brazil. Uh...we're both countries, right? So did

you come to see me because of...whatever happened to me?" Paraguay asked. Brazil shook his head, sadness overtaking his face.

"I should not be the one to explain what has just happened to you, but you will find out from your people, so I should at least tell you how things went down on the countryhuman side of things," Brazil said. Paraguay, as weak as his body was, pulled himself up further so he could look at Brazil better.

"Tell me," he said, a note of desperation in his voice. He needed to know. What happened to him. Who he was. He needed to know because he had nothing.

"You were at war with the Triple Alliance," Brazil said, inadvertently answering Paraguay's earlier question about who the Triple Alliance were. Now he knew. They were his enemies. "That alliance included your nephew, Argentina; my daughter, Uruguay; and myself."

Upon hearing that, Paraguay pressed his back against the bedframe, nicking himself with his claws. Brazil was at war with him? Brazil was his enemy? Wait, he had a nephew?

Paraguay was suddenly hit with a realization.

He didn't remember his family.

Brazil must have noticed Paraguay's expression because he shook his head with a small sigh.

"We aren't at war anymore. It ended a couple of months ago, around the same time you were injured," Brazil said, "When we found you, we rushed you to get medical attention. But...you never woke up. Well, not for long, but you were delirious and out of it."

Paraguay was glad he didn't remember that.

"Oh...so I've been..."

"Unconscious for months, yes. We were getting worried you would never wake up," Brazil said.

"Why would you be worried if we were at war?" Paraguay asked. Brazil shook his head.

"Our relationship is more complicated than that. We were at war, yes, but it was for a silly reason. You were—are stubborn, and you refused to back down even when it became clear you had lost the war. You became desperate. We had all wanted the war to end, but you kept it going based on a matter of principle," Brazil explained. Paraguay bowed his head.

"Oh," he said softly. He had extended the war? Had he made it longer? Did that mean his injury was his fault? Was he to blame for his own empty head?

"Oh, indeed. You stared it, too, over some silly little border disputes. Well...small with me. Argentina has much more land he wants to claim," Brazil said. Paraguay nervously began wringing his hands together. How could he have forgotten this all? How could he have started the war that led to this?

"I'm sorry," Paraguay whispered. How many men did Brazil and Argentina and the other one...the other...Uruguay! How many people did they lose because Paraguay started a war with them? How many people did Paraguay lose?

Brazil laughed, placing a hand on Paraguay's head, smiling.

"Don't worry about it. The war is over, so it is time to figure out our borders, but more importantly, you need to get your strength back. You may have woken up finally, but you were asleep for many months. You need to start recovering. Your government will appoint a person to help with negotiations. You don't need to worry about that. You need to recover," Brazil said.

"But...but shouldn't I be helping?" Paraguay asked. Brazil frowned.

"Can you find yourself on a map?" he asked. Paraguay looked down at his hands, trying so, so hard to remember.

He couldn't.

"No...I can't," he admitted, feeling shame run through him. Brazil sighed.

"Then you won't be able to help. I know you want to. It is always in our nature as countries to want to be involved, but you need to regain your strength. That is the best way you can help your country. I will be in the city, which is Asunción, your capital city, by the way, so please feel free to come to me with any questions about how countries work or anything of the sort," Brazil said. Paraguay frowned.

"I don't know. Shouldn't I go to my government for help remembering?" he asked. Brazil shrugged.

"I mean, you could, but your government is human. You and I are immortal. I have access to memories and our history that even they won't. Besides, war is over. I'm not your enemy. I never wanted to be," Brazil said, his voice gentle and concerned, and Paraguay felt embarrassed.

He didn't know why. Was it because Paraguay had been told he had started the war and hurt Brazil by making the taller country become Paraguay's enemy? Was it because he remembered nothing, even though he felt like he should?

Paraguay didn't know. He really didn't know anything.

He felt like crying.

His head was hurting.

"I'm sorry. I...didn't think about that. Thank you. I...thank you. For your help," Paraguay said. Brazil smiled again.

"It is not a problem, Paraguay. I hope you are able to recover soon, and I hope your memory returns," Brazil said before turning and striding out of the room, leaving Paraguay alone with his empty, *empty* head.

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It had taken Paraguay months to regain the strength to walk. It took

weeks of sitting in bed and just moving his legs in the hope of rebuilding muscle and then small, exhausting walks around the room, with help from the doctors and often Brazil.

While Paraguay had now met (or re-met, he guessed) Argentina and Uruguay, they knew him, but he didn't know them. He had begun to grow familiar with that feeling. Argentina and Uruguay didn't stick around like Brazil did. Argentina always seemed mad at him, and Uruguay seemed sad.

He wondered what he had done to them.

He was convinced now that his amnesia was probably the best thing that could happen to him. It seemed like he had been a horrible person before, that he was a person who craved war and caused others suffering and didn't care about anyone other than himself and his pride.

Paraguay had asked Brazil if that was who he had once been. Brazil looked away and shook his head, telling Paraguay that he wasn't.

Paraguay knew Brazil had been lying to protect his feelings. He knew Brazil had lied because he didn't want to admit that Paraguay used to be...used to be like that. Maybe he was afraid of Paraguay becoming like that. Maybe he just wanted to give Paraguay a chance to be better.

He didn't know.

Paraguay was confused a lot. Some things had started coming back, but it was clear they were childhood memories. Memories from long ago. Argentina had been kind enough to tell Paraguay that he was born in 1811, but Paraguay didn't know his birthday.

Maybe that could come back in the fuzzy bits he had started getting back. Maybe it wouldn't. Either way, it was the nicest thing Paraguay could remember Argentina doing for him.

Paraguay was walking around his capital for the first time in a long time, Brazil beside him in case Paraguay became too exhausted to move.

"I think we should head back to your room now. You look to be getting tired," Brazil said. Paraguay shook his head.

"I'm not tired, I'm fine. I can keep walking. I want to know more about myself," Paraguay said. Brazil huffed.

"Still as stubborn as ever. I hope that doesn't get you in the same kind of trouble as before," Brazil said, sounding annoyed. Paraguay flinched, thinking back to all that Brazil and his doctors had said and implied about the war, about who was to blame.

Paraguay shrunk in on himself.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be disagreeable. We can head back now. I'm just frustrated that it's taking so long to heal," Paraguay said softly. Brazil nodded, understanding in his eyes as he placed a gentle hand on Paraguay's shoulder.

"It's okay. But just know, you're lucky to have survived, and it is amazing that you are doing this well now. Don't sell yourself short because it isn't an automatic fix," Brazil said before turning them around, grip never wavering from Paraguay's shoulder.

"I wish it was. I want to be better. I want it all to be over," Paraguay said. Brazil laughed.

"Don't worry, it should be. We just need to figure out the border, and everything will be fine," Brazil said, moving his hand from Paraguay's shoulder to wrapping his arm around Paraguay's body, holding the smaller nation in place beside him.

"I hope so," Paraguay said, frowning slightly, "I really do hope so."

"It will. Just trust me, and it'll all turn out okay."

"Okay, Brazil. I trust you."

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Paraguay was finally putting aside his country's conflict with Brazil. Today they would create their new border, and then they wouldn't have to exist in a state of war.

Paraguay was happy.

"Are you excited?" Brazil asked. Paraguay nodded.

"I'm ready for this to all be over. You're staying in Asunción after this, right?" Paraguay asked his friend. He would miss the comfort Brazil provided him and his consistency in a time of confusion.

Paraguay had still barely recovered any of his memory. He had lost hope that he ever would.

"I am. I will need to stay until Argentina pulls his head out of his ass and works out his treaty with you," Brazil said, putting a hand to his chin.

"I'm surprised you didn't do one together, considering that you're a part of the same alliance," Paraguay commented, still puzzled as to why he and Brazil were doing it separately. Paraguay had never attended any of the peace talks that came with this treaty like Brazil had, too focused on his recovery.

He would get to participate in the one with Argentina, but he was a bit lost at times.

"Well, I did it separately because I do not want to be involved directly in the negotiating hell that will be Argentina's claims, and I'm so eager for our countries to be at peace and get along, and I'm just happy that you no longer ha—I mean...I just care about you," Brazil said. Paraguay looked away, guilt suddenly swarming him and making him feel sick.

He hated hearing about the kind of person he was before his amnesia. The kind of person he was to Brazil.

"I'm sorry for everything I did to you," Paraguay said. A small part of him felt like he didn't deserve to have a claim to any of his and Brazil's (formerly) contested land and that Brazil deserved it for having to put up with him for so long. Most of him seemed to hate the thought of losing land, but Paraguay wouldn't fight it.

It was...it was for the best. His government said so. *Brazil* said so.

"It's okay, Paraguay. Now is not the time to focus on the past but on the future." Brazil said before signing the treaty. "We can have a new start now, a better start."

"I feel like we've already gotten that," Paraguay joked as he signed the treaty as well. There was a great weight off his chest at that, and Paraguay felt as if he had made peace with a part of his past he didn't remember. Brazil chuckled.

"Maybe so," he said, "Maybe so. But you still have that treaty with Argentina to complete."

Paraguay wanted to slam his head into the table.

"Brazil, I want to do literally anything other than that. He wants over half my country!" Paraguay exclaimed, throwing his hands in the air.

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Paraguay was tired of dealing with Argentina. He couldn't wait until this treaty was signed, and he could go home. The negotiation had been long and hard, over four years since his treaty with Brazil. Argentina refused to give up his claims, and eventually, they had to send it to international arbitration.

Paraguay had never been more tense than in that moment. What if the arbitrator, United States, and his President Hayes didn't care that giving Argentina the land would cause Paraguay to lose most of his country? What would happen if he lost it?

Brazil tried his best to soothe Paraguay's nerves, but they did not fade until he found out that President Hayes had sided with Paraguay. Paraguay could not thank the man enough.

So now here he was, in Buenos Aires, leaving his country for the first time (that he could remember) to sign his treaty with Argentina. Paraguay wondered if he had ever been to the other man's capital before, if they had been in this same building, signing other treaties.

Paraguay had arrived early, and now he was waiting for Argentina

to arrive. When his nephew did arrive, he looked around the room with curious eyes.

"So, where's your keeper?" Argentina asked, raising an eyebrow.

"My...my what?" Paraguay asked, confused. What was Argentina talking about? Keeper? What did that mean?

"Your keeper. Brazil. Did you have to ask him for permission to come down and see me?" Argentina asked, voice bitter. Paraguay felt anger swell up in him.

"Brazil is my friend," he said. Argentina laughed.

"Sure he is. A real great friend," the taller nation said.

"You're just bitter because President Hayes sided with me. You're just bitter that you lost," Paraguay said. Argentina began laughing harder at that.

"I lost? I LOST? Oh, too bad you don't have your memories. You have no idea how much you've lost due to Brazil," Argentina said as his laughter faded. Paraguay only scowled, signing the treaty before crossing his arms.

"Just sign the treaty so I can leave," Paraguay said, trying his best not to snap at the other man. Argentina then looked at Paraguay with sad eyes.

"It's your choice to trust Brazil with your whole heart. It's a bad one, but it's yours. Just don't come crying to me when it's proven to be the wrong one," Argentina said before signing and marching away.

Paraguay stared after him in confusion.

What on earth did Argentina mean? Brazil could be trusted. Brazil was his closest friend. Argentina was just lying because he was bitter.

Right?

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Brazil was leaving.

Paraguay knew it was going to happen eventually. The man was his own country, after all, but it felt too soon. He wanted Brazil to stay; he felt lost without the other man, the man who had helped him and guided him through how to be a country again. The man who provided stability for him after he lost...lost everything.

He didn't want him to go.

"I wish you didn't have to go," Paraguay said, as he and Brazil had met up to talk one last time before they both had to go back to their lives as countries.

"I have to. I need to get back to my own capital. The war is over. You have your borders with Argentina and me. There's no reason for our troops to stay. It violates your rights as a country," Brazil said. Paraguay sighed.

"I know it does...I just...you've been my one constant since I woke up. Losing that will be hard," Paraguay explained. Brazil laughed.

"You can always write me letters. It's not like we'll never see each other again," Brazil said, "Besides, you'll do fine. You were a country before, and you can be one again."

"I was a very different person before," Paraguay said, sighing again, "I'm just nervous, I guess. It's the first time being alone and dealing with all this. I know you and I have different paths...but sometimes it's hard not to wish things could be different."

"Everything is different now. A good different. It'll work out. You've been very good at playing your part so far," Brazil said, putting a hand on Paraguay's shoulder, grin widening. "You will be fine."

"I hope so. Thank you, Brazil. For everything you've done to help me. With my memory, my recovery, just...thank you."

"You're very welcome, Paraguay. Now, I must be off. Hopefully, we can see each other very soon."

With that final message, Paraguay's only friend wandered off,

joining his soldiers.

Paraguay would be alone for the first time since he lost his memory.

He hoped he was ready for it.

Treinta y Tres Orientales

Prompt: Uruguay

Treinta y Tres Orientales was going to be recognized as an independent country. She wasn't going to be signing the treaty, but she was going to be recognized as an independent country.

It was nerve-wracking.

Treinta y Tres Orientales wanted to be there to watch the treaty get signed. She wanted to be there to look Brazil in the eyes and show him that she existed and could be an independent country, that she *would* be an independent country.

But fate did not work in her favor. She was not permitted to attend the signing and had to wait for Río de la Plata to sign it instead.

That was a few months ago, back in August. Now, it was the late hours of October third, and the next day, she was supposed to become independent. Treinta y Tres Orientales couldn't sleep as she was too excited.

Originally, she had thought she was going to become one of Río de la Plata's provinces, but thanks to Britain's diplomatic negotiations, she was actually going to become a nation.

She could hardly believe it. It was just so amazing.

Her rebellion worked, her plan to get Río de la Plata's help worked, and now she was no longer a Brazilian province, no longer Cisplatine, but Treinta y Tres Orientales!

She needed a new name.

Treinta y Tres Orientales was who she was, the name of the people who got her her independence, but it was not the name of a country. When the dawn broke and she became her own country, it

would be time for a new name, a name to mark the country she would become.

She was so excited.

La Colonia de España

Dominican Republic was so mad. She was furious and couldn't believe that Pedro Santana had done this. After everything, after all it took to get her independence from Haiti, to restore her country, he did this to her? Sold her away to their original colonizer?

She was so angry.

She knew they had been having economic issues since her war of independence, but this wasn't the right way to go about fixing things.

It couldn't be.

But there was nothing she could do. When she tried to protest it, she was called hysterical and put on house arrest as Pedro Santana put together a bunch of attendants to "teach her what she needed to know as a Spanish Colony."

Dominican Republic *hated* it. She didn't fight for her own independence to be subjected like this, to be dressed up like a pretty little doll for the Kingdom of Spain and Spanish Empire.

She was her own country.

So when the day finally came that she was to meet Spanish Empire, Dominican Republic was ordered to stay in her room, to sit still as she was dressed in a far too fancy dress and prepped like she was a gift to be given to the Spanish Empire.

In a way, she guessed she was.

Dominican Republic nervously scratched at the back of her hand as she waited for the empire to come and collect her, to drag her away from her home and people to be under his command.

When Spanish Empire entered the room, he entered with a great

deal of pomp and confidence.

"Ah, mi colonia, so wonderful to see you. I am so happy you and your people have come to your senses. I cannot wait until the rest of my colonies do, and our family can be reunited once more," he said, not even looking at her, just past her to the window. Dominican Republic hated him. She hated the disregard he had for her, the fact that he did not even realize she and her people didn't like him or this idea.

"Are you sure their people will want to do that?" Dominican Republic asked. Spanish Empire finally turned to face her, gasping a little as he did so. "What?"

"You look so much like Santo Domingo did," Spanish Empire said, something soft in his eyes. "I suppose it is fitting that you will now take her name."

"Take her name? But...I mean, I know I will not be a republic anymore, but can I not keep Dominican as my name?" Dominican Republic asked. Spanish Empire laughed.

"Of course not, chica. You're my colony now, and therefore, the original and proper name of this island will be restored to it," Spanish Empire said, placing a possessive hand on Dominican Republic's shoulder and guiding her out of the room.

"Oh, okay," Domini—Santo Domingo said, nervously twiddling her thumbs.

"Your brother, the kingdom, will be happy to see you," Spanish Empire said.

"Brother?" Santo Domingo asked.

"Yes, yes, the Kingdom of Spain, as I am your father now," Spanish Empire said. Santo Domingo shrunk in on herself.

"Oh...I didn't realize..." she said. She didn't realize that this meant she was being adopted.

"Of course you are! Since that Haití killed the son of the first Santo

Domingo, and you are his child, you have lost your proper bloodline. I am going to make you my child and return you to the proper bloodline, just like I am returning you to the empire. You will be at peace and happy." Spanish Empire said.

He seemed...softer when he spoke. He walked with pomp and the egotistical confidence of an empire, but he spoke like a man, like a *human*, with care and kindness and a sense of loss.

It wouldn't bring Santo Domingo to his side. But...she thought she understood him better.

"My people do not want to give up their independence so soon after winning it," Santo Domingo tried to explain, hoping the empire would understand.

"Of course they do! Everything is better under my flag. You do not need to make up excuses for the rebels that are coming. I know you probably care about them. But I will still have to deal with them via proper means. It will be okay," he said, causing Santo Domingo to grit her teeth in frustration.

"But—"

"Silencio, leonita. It is time for you to get your new flag. I am...I am so excited to see the flag of Santo Domingo again. Your sister...your sister would be so happy," Spanish Empire said, guiding her to the flagpole, where they were surrounded by his soldiers. Foreign troops meant to keep her under his control.

"I'm sure she would," an unfamiliar voice from behind them said. Spanish Empire brightened, turning around and bringing Santo Domingo with him. It was a countryperson who had spoken, another colony of the Spanish Empire. His head was bowed towards Spanish Empire, and Santo Domingo felt her suppressed anger rise, hoping she would not have to do the same.

"Puerto Rico! Leonita, I forgot to mention that your brother and nephew were going to be here. This is Puerto Rico, your brother," Spanish Empire said, pushing Santo Domingo towards the shorter colony. His face held the dulled flag of the Spanish Empire. Santo

Domingo wondered if her's was about to hold the same.

"Hello, Sister, Father. It is so wonderful that you have rejoined us," Puerto Rico said. Something about his voice felt fake as if he did not believe what he said. Santo Domingo wondered if she had found an ally.

But it was hard to tell. Puerto Rico's face remained cheerful, and he always showed submissiveness to his empire, always bowing his head slightly while talking to his father.

Then again, she wasn't an expert on healthy relationships with fathers.

"And where is Cuba?" Spanish Empire asked.

"He is coming, Father. He is just ensuring that his volunteer divisions are all in order. He and I both want to see this go off perfectly," Puerto Rico said with a submissive bow of his head.

Santo Domingo hoped that she would not be expected to do the same.

"Ah, good, good. Shall we wait, then?" Spanish Empire asked.

"Whatever you think is best, Father," Puerto Rico said, pleasant smile never leaving his face. Spanish Empire hummed.

"Fetch your nephew. I want all of our family here to be present for this," he said. Puerto Rico nodded and quickly walked away.

"He's...nice," Santo Domingo said. Spanish Empire nodded.

"He is very kind. And very reliable," he said before they fell into an uncomfortable silence. It remained that way until Puerto Rico returned with a taller Spanish colony, who bowed his head at Spanish Empire upon arrival.

"I am sorry for being late, Grandfather, Aunt Santo Domingo," the colony—who must be Cuba—said.

"It is not a problem. We can begin now!" Spanish Empire then

announced. Santo Domingo bowed her head, staring at her feet as she did her best to ignore her independence slipping away, weakening her as invisible chains seemed to clamp to her wrists, binding her to the empire beside her.

Her brain became foggy, and she felt Spanish Empire wrap his arms around her, keeping her in place. She was suddenly so tired, so numb. What was happening?

"Shhh, mijita. It's just our león from your new flag. You will be okay," Spanish Empire said, running a gentle hand through her hair.

"It will be over soon," Puerto Rico whispered. "Just give in, and it'll be over with."

Santo Domingo listened and let the exhaustion overwhelm her, sinking into a comfortable blanket of fog.

Excluido

Prompt: Cuba

Cuba was pissed. After all, he had worked to get his independence; he wasn't allowed to negotiate the treaty with his grandfather. He had to sit back in his own country and do nothing while United States passed the laws that would give him his freedom.

He didn't trust it. Any of it. He...

"If you keep pacing like that, you're going to wear a hole in the floor," his brother's voice said from behind his. Cuba turned around to see Florida sitting there, a faint smile on his face.

"I'm worried," Cuba said.

"America—United States won't annex you if that's what you're worried about. Congress has passed an act to ensure that," Florida said. Cuba scoffed.

"And yet, even though this is the war in which I will get my independence, United States is negotiating that for me, and I am not even allowed input," he pointed out, watching his brother closely. While he and Puerto Rico had suspected Florida had not died when he joined the United States, it was not confirmed for Cuba until Florida showed up in his country to help him fight the Spanish.

Now that he had reunited with Florida, he could see his brother had changed. It was like when they got him back after his stint as a British colony. It was...it was still Florida, but different. Florida still looked and acted like his brother, but there was something undeniably United Statian about him.

"I'm sure he's doing it for a good reason. Like the fact that Spanish Empire will listen to him more since he is a country," Florida said. Cuba rolled his eyes.

"You can't possibly believe that. You and I both know he's doing it to get more land, to annex Puerto Rico and Philippines, and, yeah, maybe I am gaining independence, but that doesn't change the fact that I am not going to be there. United States got to negotiate his independence, but I'm not?" Cuba argued. Florida shrugged and looked away.

"I trust that he is doing it for a good reason," Florida said. Cuba groaned.

"Florida, I know you aren't this stupid. You can't possibly believe that. What about the Civil—" Cuba was cut off by Florida quickly turning to face him, angrily jabbing a finger in Cuba's chest.

"Don't you dare bring that up when you know nothing about it! I was in the wrong then. I was a bad person who...who...Dad was right then, and I should have never disobeyed him, and everything bad that happened to me afterward was my fault because I deserved it, so you...you don't get to talk to me about that!" Florida said, tears in his eyes before marching off, fists clenched against his side.

Cuba had not meant to touch that big of a nerve. He didn't realize...

Florida spoke very similarly to how he used to speak of their father, of how they needed to obey and obey because they did not deserve free will, and...Cuba was worried now. He knew civil wars were always bloody and uniquely devastating for the countryhumans of their nations, but Florida's words just made him want to trust United States less.

He wanted to become his own country, not a pseudo-colony or a US protectorate, but his own man, his own country.

He couldn't trust that United States wasn't going to take advantage of him.

Alone again, Cuba resumed his pacing.

He only hoped that everything would work out in the end. He didn't want to become a colony again, not after everything, not after all he had fought and bled for.

He hoped the United States was really giving him his independence, really was making that treaty with Cuba's interests in mind.

But somehow, he seriously doubted that.

La Colonia Nueva de los Estados Unidos

Prompt: Puerto Rico

January 15, 1899

Puerto Rico was nervous. Everything had been changing so quickly for him. First, it was Cuba starting another bid for his independence. Then, it was finding out from Cuba that his nephew Florida was alive, as America and his father worked out the terms ending the war between them.

That was only a few weeks ago. Now, Puerto Rico was a US colony under a military government, as he had not yet been granted a civilian government.

Puerto Rico understood that. He had just become an American, and he was sure America was just figuring things out with Cuba and Philippines. He was a busy man.

Florida had been helpful in helping Puerto Rico adjust to the many states and territories that Puerto Rico now shared a country with, although some of the newer ones he did not know, like Hawai‘i, the new territory that seemed to think that becoming American was a bad thing.

How did she not see that this was a great thing for her? That America was helping her, turning her into a better personification and helping her people. Puerto Rico didn't get it. It didn't make any sense.

"Porto!" Puerto Rico heard from behind him. Turning, he saw the tall state of Texas walking over to him.

"Hello, Texas," he responded, his English unaccented thanks to the American military men in his land. Whenever he spoke in

unaccented English, he felt proud and glad that he was already growing into a good American.

"Dad needs you—something about a name update," Texas said. Puerto Rico nodded.

"Thank you for telling me," he said, standing up and making his way over to America's room. Upon arriving at the door, he knocked before waiting for America to answer. The military government had drilled into him that he was always to treat America with respect and unquestioning loyalty, something Puerto Rico was all too happy to oblige with. After all, why wouldn't he do that?

America was helping him become better. There was no reason to disobey.

"Come in!" America called, and Puerto Rico walked in, sitting in one of the extra chairs there and waiting to be addressed. "How do you spell your name?"

Puerto Rico blinked, confused, but did as he was required.

"P-U-E-R-T—" he began before America cut him off.

"Not anymore. We're changing that to make it less... un-American," America began, as the colony sat up straighter in his seat, eager to hear what new improvement America had for him. It was only a little thing, but when you needed as much help as he did, every little bit counted. "Your name will still sound the same; it just fits your new status better."

"So, P-O-R-T-O?" the colony asked.

"Smart. I wasn't sure if you would pick up on the proper spelling so quickly," America said, looking impressed. Porto Rico smiled slightly.

"The military has me spend at least three hours a day with an English tutor to ensure I am prepared for civilian government," Porto Rico said. America nodded.

"That's good. Although you've come so far in only a few weeks, I'm

sure you will be getting it soon enough," he said. Porto Rico brightened.

"Really?"

"Really. You've done a great job. You'll be a real American soon enough."

Smiling wider this time, Porto Rico thanked America before taking his leave.

He never would have guessed that this was the path that life had in store for him, but he was so grateful it was.

He couldn't imagine being anything else.

La Muerte de Imperio

Prompt: Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea was independent. It was about time, in a way, but at the same time, so...strange.

Her independence led to the death of the Spanish Empire. Her father, who survived through the Latin American Wars of Independence, the Spanish-American War, through all of that, was killed by her, a tiny little African country, the same country that had kept him alive through all of that before. She was what led to his death.

It was so strange.

Equatorial Guinea couldn't really bring herself to care, however. Sure, he had been her father, but he was an empire—an empire that controlled her and kept her from her independence.

It was...it was hard to grieve a man like that. According to the rumors she had heard from some of the former British colonies, he could have been worse, but even a tamed empire was still an empire.

So, how should she feel? What side should she take? Neither was great. She just...she wanted to be her own person, and she hoped she could figure out how, but the empires never accounted for the people that came before them, and conflict and resentment were already brewing.

Equatorial Guinea wasn't sure what independence would mean for her. The other former Spanish colonies either won their independence or were taken by other nations and given their independence from them.

She was the first Spanish colony to be given independence, to be prepared for that. What did that mean for her? For her people? For

her relationship with Spain, the one that bore the full brunt of the dictatorship's control.

That government could barely stand Spain thinking differently than them. Were they really okay with her independence?

She didn't know. She could only hope that things worked out. Otherwise...well, it was better not to think about that.

She was independent now. She wanted to think positively.

Las Coronas

Prompt: Spain

Crown of Castile was not in love with Crown of Aragon—no matter what his mother or Kingdom of Aragon said. Just because their crowns had united didn't mean they had to be in love. That was a stupid and foolish argument being made by kingdoms surviving off their children's success, pretending like they still had importance.

It annoyed him so much.

He wished that they did not insist on hounding him about it.

"Your mother told me I would be able to find you here." Crown of Castile sighed as he heard the Kingdom of Aragon's voice from behind him.

"Are you here to admit that you share the delusion that I am in love with your daughter?" Crown of Castile asked. Kingdom of Aragon shrugged, something glimmering in his eyes.

"I believe there is more to your relationship than you say, with that empire child you two have had together," he said. Crown of Castile couldn't help but snort in amusement at that.

"You and I both know that children mean nothing to the personal relations of our kind. Even if our monarchs are married, that does not mean that we are. We do not reflect our kings, and I am tired of everyone expecting me to be him. I am the Crown of Castile. Not the king," Crown of Castile said, gritting his teeth.

"I never said you were. But there are rumors that something is going on between you two," Kingdom of Aragon said. Crown of Castile turned and began walking away.

"Rumors are just rumors. Just gossip meant to diminish

relationships and destroy alliances," Crown of Castile said before turning to face the Kingdom of Aragon. "I suggest you stop listening to them."

"You know, the more you try to deny them, the more people will just insist they are true, Castile. And the more I will try and spread it as well," Crown of Aragon then said, entering the hall, a slight smirk on her face. Crown of Castile rolled his eyes.

"Oh, shut it, will you? I'm fine with being around you all, but why do you all have to spread that rumor?" he asked.

"Well, mainly because it annoys you so much," Crown of Aragon answered, her voice never wavering from its sweet and innocent tone despite the sharp look in her eyes.

Crown of Castile groaned. He hated these people. So much. He would have to figure out a rumor to spread about them as payback.

No one ever said he wasn't a petty man.

Mi Mejor Amigo

Prompt: Brazil

Brazil loved mocking idiots on the internet. Doing it with Philippines just made it better. There was nothing the two of them loved more than being able to meet up and shit-talk people until, eventually, many of Brazil's states joined in, and they ran through every single piece of gossip that had come about in the few months since they last met up.

"Oh, Phil, did you know you're curing me of my lesbianism?" Brazil asked her friend as they sat, lounging around her home, just enjoying being able to exist in the other's company.

"Oh, yeah, sorry, but asexuality doesn't exist, so I needed someone to be my girlfriend, and you are the only good option," Philippines joked, a familiar smile curling across his face.

"And yet you're cheating on me with Hawai‘i," Brazil teased. Philippines snorted.

"Better that conspiracy theory than the other one," he said. Brazil winced.

"Ah, that does it a little close to home, doesn't it? Sorry," she said. Philippines waved her off, a smile on his face.

"Don't be. You did nothing to trigger anything, so it is all okay," he said before brightening as he looked at his phone. "Oh my god, people are drawing the Brazilippines flag as a country person."

"What? Give me that!" Brazil said, leaning over and snatching Philippines' phone from his hand, looking at the (admittedly well-drawn) art before laughing.

"I'm not bothered by that; that's just fun and cool," Philippines said. "We should try to convince historians far in the future that

Brazilippines is a real person."

"You are a menace to society," Brazil deadpanned. Philippines shrugged.

"Well, duh, how else am I going to use my free will?" he asked.

"Don't even joke about that," Brazil said, shooting him a glare.

"It's my trauma!"

"I'm getting you a therapist."

"Betrayed by my best friend. I can't believe it."

"Oh, shut up, Philippines."

El Discípulo Fiel

Prompt: Colonial Legacies

New Spain adored his father. How could he not, when his father was such a perfect image of Holy Glory and power? How could he not love the man who was the closest being to God that Earth had since Jesus himself?

New Spain would do anything his father asked of him without question. He was a good son, a loyal son. It was his job to strive for complete and total perfection so his father would never have to worry about his colonies rebelling, so his father could live his life in peace and luxury, as God intended.

One of his biggest challenges in that was ensuring his children's perfection.

While New Spain had many siblings, all of whom were at their own various stages of perfection, his children were the ones whose perfection he cultivated. Florida and Cuba, his two sons, would be the image of perfection.

He would not allow flaws or fits to exist in them, and he would not allow them to tarnish his father's name. His siblings could run around in filth and tarnish their father's name, but New Spain would not allow his children to fall to that level of deplorable sin.

His children would uphold the perfection and holiness of his father's kingdom. They would be well-educated, skilled, and unquestioning in their thoughts and actions, just as all good colonies should be.

They would never mix with the sinful natives of their lands and would stay safe and secure where they belonged, by their grandfather's side. If New Spain had to hurt them to ensure they understood their place, then he would. Whatever was necessary to ensure perfection must be done.

New Spain's grandparents, Abuelo Castile, Abuela Aragon, Bisabuela Castile, and Bisabuelo Aragon, were a big help in ensuring their perfection.

Abuelo Castile had helped New Spain to understand the importance of perfection and helped to keep New Spain's sinning siblings in line, and he expected New Spain, his only grandchild who understood, to do the same with his children.

New Spain was loyal to his family. He would do whatever they asked. He was a colony, after all, and they were kingdoms and empires.

Anything other than his complete fidelity would be unthinkable.

He was his father's son. And he would obey. He would be perfect. And anyone that fell under his command would be perfect as well.

Comida y Familia

Prompt: Hispánico Diaspora

Texas couldn't begin to tell you when things between him and his mother began to change. It felt both sudden and slow, a crumbling wall between them that faded as they both seemed to get tired of hating each other.

Unsurprisingly, Mexico reached out first. Texas had never been one to be in tune with his emotions, and he was grateful that the change to change things was presented to him, as opposed to him having to initiate the change.

It was nice to have her back in his life again. Many of his people were still Tejano, and Texas would be lying to himself to deny the influence of Mexican culture and heritage in his land.

Their relationship was not one of talking, not as much. They both knew there were things unsaid, but they had silently agreed to leave it. It was too painful to talk about now. Maybe it would always be too painful. Who really knew?

But they bonded over cooking, something they both loved to do. Texas introduced his mother to Tex-Mex, and she would introduce him to some regional dishes his half-siblings had.

"How es el guac, Madre?" Texas called over to his mother, trying to avoid removing too much of his attention from the steak in front of him.

"Casi terminado. How is your steak going?" Mexico asked, brushing her hair from her face. Texas turned back to his steak.

"I am the Master of Steak. It's going great," Texas said, "Gracias por coming over and cooking with me."

"Dios mio, you're going to give me a headache," Mexico said. Texas grinned.

"It's what I'm best at. 'Sides Spanglish ain't all that hard to understand," he said, "California uses it more than me. For someone with an official language, they are great at mixing languages."

"Have you managed to convince California to come to our cooking sessions?" Mexico asked. Texas's smile faded.

"They ain't here, are they?" he said, before sighing, "It's different with her. She was only a country for so long, then she was comatose, and then she was an American. Maybe she ain't Pa's bio-kid, but she feels more like his than yours. And I think she is waiting until she's sure we ain't gonna start trying to kill one another again."

"Yucatán said the same thing to me once. It's nice to know our family has faith in us."

"To be fair, I did stab you," Texas said, grin returning.

"A lucky blow. You only got it because I was playing nice," Mexico said. Texas laughed.

"You call that nice? Remind me not to go to war with you again," he said, shaking his head.

"You did."

"Nah, Pa did," Texas protested. Mexico raised an eyebrow, and Texas looked away, chastised.

"I missed you, Texas."

"I missed you too, Madre. Sorry...sorry about all I did to you," Texas said. Mexico placed a wing on his back.

"I forgive you, mijo."

"You don't need to," Texas said, guilt welling up.

"I want to. I have lost enough children to this world. I do not want to lose anymore."

Florida Occidental

Prompt: Non-Hispanic Formerly Spanish Colonies

Florida knew he should be more upset about becoming a British colony—about being taken away from his family and shoved into an environment in which he knew nobody.

Sure, Santiago had become British, but that was long ago, and Florida was sure that his prior identity as Santiago had been all but erased from his mind.

He was happy to escape his Padre's overbearing, perfectionist nature, the never-ending stream of insults and jeers towards the imperfections that made Florida the failure he was.

He wondered if his Padre and Abuelo would even miss him. Surely, Padre would be happy that his children looked a little more perfect with Florida gone. He just hoped that Gran Bretaña would be kind to him, more accepting of Florida's imperfections, or at least passing them off as a result of his Spanish heritage.

Although, based on how Gran Bretaña ignored Florida, focusing only on the French Colonies, it seemed that Florida might get off lighter and be looked at less closely as Gran Bretaña monitored the children of his most hated enemy.

Florida was often left alone, not yet ordered to bow at Gran Bretaña's and forsake his family for the empire he was now a part of.

He realized why a few months after moving in.

He was ordered to Gran Bretaña's room by the Thirteen Colonies, the colony that was supposed to be teaching him English. Florida had suddenly known it when the British took control, but now Thirteen Colonies mainly helped him by perfecting his grammar

and getting rid of his accent, all flaws Gran Bretaña wouldn't allow.

After seeing what Gran Bretaña did to the colonies that annoyed him, Florida was eager to get rid of it.

The pressure of perfection had returned. Although Thirteen Colonies was much kinder than Florida's Padre had been. It was...it was nice.

But when Gran Bretaña ordered Florida to his office, Florida was scared about what that meant. Had he not been perfect enough? Had Gran Bretaña learned of Florida's horrible imperfections from his Padre or Abuelo?

"Hello, señ—sir. You wanted to speak with me?" Florida asked, trying his best to focus on appearing normal and speaking English.

"Yes, I did. I know we have not spoken much since your arrival, and I wanted to apologize for that. The French colonies and their disloyalties have kept me busy ensuring they understand where their loyalties now lie," Gran Bretaña explained with an apologetic smile.

"I understand," Florida answered.

"And I thank you for that. I see your lessons with my son have been going well. It is nice to see you adapting so quickly. Now, I figured it was about time we established the relationship that would exist between us." Gran Bretaña said. Florida was quick to bow his head, a habit long ingrained into him by his father.

"If you want to become my father, I am willing and ready to disown my Spanish family to become a true part of your empire," Florida recited the lines he had come up with and practiced for ages with Thirteen Colonies to ensure that he said them correctly and, of course, perfectly.

"Thank you for your willingness, but I'm afraid I cannot accept that," Gran Bretaña said. Florida froze, horror running through him. Did that mean what he thought it meant? Was Gran Bretaña planning on killing him?

"I accept your judgment," Florida responded, trying to keep the fear from his voice. It didn't work, as he could tell that Gran Bretaña had picked up on it.

"Do you think I'm going to kill you?" Gran Bretaña asked, sounding confused. Florida shrank in on himself.

"I understand why you would. I'm a—"

"Florida, you aren't going to die. Trust me. Jamaica is...actually, I'm not sure if he's your brother, but he was Spanish too, and he and I are close. I don't want you to die. I believe that you can be a great addition to the empire. However, my government wishes to create a new colony from your preexisting land, and therefore..."

"Oh. We're going to have a kid," Florida realized. Gran Bretaña nodded.

"Yes. So I feel it is too awkward for you to call me father. However, if you feel it is beneficial to do a legal recognition, but not an emotional one, I can arrange that," Gran Bretaña said.

"I would prefer not. I am loyal to you and only you, but I just do not want to...deal with complications from that," Florida said. Gran Bretaña nodded.

"I understand completely. Now, I will call you back once I have fetched West Florida, who will be born sometime this week. Your new name will be East Florida, but you do not need to start using it until the new colony is born. I just wanted to give you an advance warning so you can start getting used to the name," Gran Bretaña said, smiling again.

"Thank you," Florida said, his voice tinged with relief.

"You're welcome. Thank you for being understandable. You are shaping up to be a good colony." Gran Bretaña said.

Florida couldn't help but smile. It was nice to know that he was wanted.

¿Quién es el País de España?

Prompt: Fiesta/Siesta

Spain had been born under Caudillo Franco's thumb. His life had been dictated by that man, everything from his actions to his human name. Spain often felt that he was playing a role rather than being a countryhuman. He was just a doll to dress up any play, never a person with thoughts and feelings.

He felt empty a lot—maybe depressed. Not that he could tell anyone that. He had a reputation to uphold. It felt empty, which is probably why he played his part so well. It was something.

Spain was tired a lot.

But...there was something in him that wasn't, a tiny spark of life he hadn't known existed.

A spark that only appeared after he was told Caudillo Franco had died.

Spain was still trying to process that. A part of him wanted to celebrate, to scream and cry and let out all the emotions that he had suppressed under Caudillo Franco's orders. A part of him wanted to celebrate.

All of him felt nervous.

But no matter how much he wanted to, Spain didn't cry. He just sat on his bed, wings wrapped around his body, so utterly numb. Everything was different now.

A part of him wished that Abuelo or Equatorial Guinea were still with him. They had been his rocks, the people who reminded him of his humanity on the days when his head was full of nothing, and Franco's words were absolute.

They had kept Spain feeling like a person. They, and the voices that whispered in his ears, brought him comfort and kept him grounded, even after they had both left.

But voices were still voices, and it didn't help as much as a living, breathing person did. The past seven years without Abuelo and Equatorial Guinea had stripped that away from him. Even if Prince Juan Carlos didn't treat Spain like Franco had, how was he supposed to recover from this?

Spain...he didn't know. Anything. What was going to happen now, what was going to come of himself and his nation, all of it was a big mystery.

In a way, he supposed that was better. There was no way for him to get his hopes up. He would wait until his new role was given and then play that. It would...it would be better.

Right?

"I hope so. But...it could always go badly."

Spain hoped it didn't. He was good at playing his part, but he couldn't deny the part of him that wanted to be his own person.

But he would have to wait and see.

Nuestra Hijos Caídos

Prompt: Indigenous People

"I didn't think he would fall. My son. He seemed...he seemed so strong, and like he was only getting stronger. I'm sure you know how that feels." Quechua said to the man beside her. Nahua let out a little laugh, but there was pain in his eyes.

"I didn't expect to lose them all that fast, that's for sure. My entire family is just...gone. I thank any being who showed me mercy that Mexica lives. And Tlaxcaltecs, even though he helped to kill them," Nahua said, staring up at the endless sky above. "I dream of a different world, where they never happened, or where we won a little, where we all got to live. Ciudad looks so much like Aztec Empire. Did you know that?"

"No. The ones we have now always look a little too much like the ones we lost. Peru is so much like Tawantinsuyu. At the same time...he's so much like *him*," Quechua said.

"It's a very different world. I knew we were always meant to live through change, but...I didn't ever think it would be this bad," Nahua said before sighing.

"I never did. If I went back in time and told myself even a few years before they came...I would have never believed it." Quechua said, tears welling in her eyes. The pain had numbed, but at the same time, it felt like she had lost her child only yesterday.

"Neither would I," Nahua said, "But at least we have people who understand the loss. I would not be able to face this alone. Losing so many empires, and then...I'm glad we're still here, at least. To keep their memories alive."

"Me too."

Los Dos Buenos Aires

Prompt: Música

"Buenito, just watch the master at work," Buenos Aires Province said. Her nephew, the not-at-all-confusingly named Ciudad Buenos Aires, rolled his eyes.

"I can play tango just as well as you, Aunt Aires," Ciudad Buenos Aires, who we are just going to call Buenito, responded, annoyed. His aunt, who will be called Aires, smiled.

"Buenito, I love you, but I have decades of experience with you. I am the master, and you will acknowledge it," she said.

"That doesn't mean I'm not good. Otherwise, you wouldn't have dragged me all the way over here," Buenito said, scowling.

"You're always annoyed, aren't you?" Aires asked. Buenito's scowl deepened, and Aires just laughed. "Don't worry, I know you are skilled, I just like poking fun at you."

As Aires did that, she poked Buenito's cheek a few times to emphasize her point. Buenito knocked her hand away, but he could not help the small smile that was spreading across his face with his aunt's antics.

"I know you do," he said. He loved playing music with his aunt. It was one of the few things they had in common, so they used it to bond a lot. Plus, it was a lot of fun for them both.

"Well, now that my obligatory mocking is out of the way...you ready to play?"

Buenito shot his aunt an excited grin.

"Always."

Bachata

Prompt: Baliar

"If I had known how strict you were going to be about this, I wouldn't have asked you to teach me bachata," Nicaragua joked. Dominican Republic grinned widely, her eyes full of excitement.

"But then you would get subpar lessons. I am the master of bachata, and everyone knows it," Dominican Republic snarked. Nicaragua rolled her eyes, but there was no denying the smile present on her face.

"Yeah, yeah," Nicaragua said with a roll of her eyes, "Just show mercy, will you?"

"There is no mercy in being a good dancer," Dominican Republic said, "Because if you are going to learn my favorite kind of dance, you will be good at it. My own family is not making a mockery of bachata."

"Fine. Why do you know how to dance lead anyway?" Nicaragua asked. The grin Dominican Republic gave her was near feral.

"I am the master of all things bachata," she said.

"Why do I feel like there is trauma wrapped up in this?" Nicaragua asked. Dominican Republic laughed.

"There's trauma wrapped up in everything we do. Now, come on, I have a lesson to finish."

Hermanos

Prompt: Familia

"Rico, do you remember when Padre used to get mad at us for saying we were siblings?" Cuba asked one evening as he and Puerto Rico slowly walked down the streets of the latter's capital. Puerto Rico was his uncle on his Padre's side but on the side of his native father's...Puerto Rico was his half-brother. It was a strange set of circumstances that Padre had hated more than anything.

"How can I not? He never went after me, but his anger was loud enough that we knew it, even though he played nice in front of my padre," Puerto Rico joked before looking back at Cuba, concern in his eyes. "What's this about?"

Cuba didn't answer, and Puerto Rico sighed.

"Cubito..." he began warningly.

"Don't Cubito me. I'm taller," Cuba said, trying his best to keep a smile on his face. Puerto Rico raised a skeptical eyebrow, and Cuba's resolve crumbled. "I've just been thinking about things recently. Padre's gone; you're a United Statian now, and I'm going to be a new country soon. I...I feel like so much has changed, and I...I don't want to lose what's left of my family."

"Cuba, if you think being a country is going to stop me from being your big brother, I'm going to start thinking that independence made you stupid," Puerto Rico deadpanned. Cuba stopped in his tracks, gaping at the smaller colony.

"Excuse me?" He asked, startled. Puerto Rico smiled before speaking.

"You heard me. That's a stupid thing to say. I'm always going to be with you, and I can tell you now that your brother feels the same

way. Florida was never hiding from you. He was hiding from New Spain and the expectations of perfection that haunted him. But not from you, you know that."

Cuba knew that. It was one of the first things Puerto Rico had said to him when they reunited, that he was sorry for leaving Cuba behind. Florida had sworn on his immortality that Cuba would always be his family, be his hermanito.

It was easy to be told that. It was harder to believe it.

"I know I'm just...I've never been alone before. I've wanted this for so, so long, and I'm not going to give it up, but...I never realized how lonely it was going to be," Cuba sighed.

"We're not going to leave you...we're just going to be somewhere else. A new house, a different country. But *come on,* Cubito, you know how big this family is and how many countries make it up. Is Dominican Republic any less your aunt because she's independent and adopted?" Puerto Rico asked. Cuba shook his head.

"Of course not!" he said. Aunt Dominican Republic had struggled with her place in the family due to the nature of her adoption and the nature of the restoration of her independence, but she never stopped being family, always sending letters and remaining in contact, even apologizing to Abuelo for giving him false hope that their family would be reunited again.

"Then why is it different when it's you and not her?" Puerto Rico asked. Cuba paused, processing that question. Why was it different? Why did he feel like his entire family was going to leave him as soon as he became independent?

"I don't...I don't know," Cuba eventually said. Puerto Rico smiled, soft and sweet, so reminiscent of the foggy memories Cuba had of their native father.

"We'll be there for you. I promise. We'll write, and we'll visit, and we *will* ensure that you never feel alone. Understood?" Puerto Rico asked. Cuba smiled, pushing aside tears.

"Perfectly."